

TRUTHFULNESS

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“O Lord, are not Your eyes upon the truth?”
Jeremiah 5:3.

THE allusion is not to doctrinal truth of God, or truth in the abstract, but to practical truth as it should exist in the hearts and lives of men. It might be read, “Lord, are not Your eyes upon truthfulness?” Or, “upon faithfulness?” The Lord bade them produce a single truthful man in all Jerusalem and Jeremiah answers that if truth were to be found, the Lord Himself best knew where it was, for His eyes were always upon it. In this chapter you must have noticed, when I was reading it, that we have a fearful description of the condition of things in the days of the prophet Jeremiah. We have also a most melancholy set of pictures of untruthful men which are drawn to the life with a grimly graphic touch which strangely reminds me of the series of Hogarth’s sketches known as, “the Rake’s Progress.” They hold the mirror up not only to the life, but to the heart of the men of the times.

Jerusalem was rotten to the core—the nation was deceitful through and through. In the 27th verse we read, “As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit.” They had schemes without number, plots without end and tricks without limit moving about in their minds like birds herded together in a little cage. What worse could be said? When a heart is untruthful and crooked—when uprightness has gone from it—then is it prepared to be the seed plot of every evil thing. Any crime is possible to a liar! He who is rotten with falsehood will tear at the touch of temptation. A man of bold, outspoken vice is far more hopeful than a sly, cunning hypocrite! These untruthful people began with acting untruthfully towards their fellow men. God challenges them to run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem and see whether they could find a man that executed judgment and sought the truth.

He says that they were not even commonly honest towards those persons whose necessities generally plead for favor. “They judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless and the right of the needy do they not judge.” They were not upright in cases where they should have been charitable. They even cheated the widow and the orphan! When a man has once become a rogue, all will be fish that comes to his net and he will as soon rob the fatherless as anybody else. Greed destroys common humanity. Cheating of men is a very common form of deceit, both in the open puffery of trade and the more quiet deceptions of daily life. Traders frequently think it useless to tell the honest truth, even, to one another and so society becomes a network of craft and falsehood. It is a dreadful thing when men are not to be trusted; when their word is but wind; when without its being to their advantage they would as soon lie as not.

God save us from that form of untruthfulness, since it leads on to something worse, for in the second verse it is said that these people were faithless even to their oaths! “They say, ‘Jehovah lives,’ but surely they swear falsely.” They dared to take that most sacred of all names upon their lips and call God to witness to a lie! He who has gone as far as falsehood will not always stop at perjury. That which makes our blood ran cold to think of may yet be perpetrated by us if we take the first steps in deceit. This being so—that they could perjure themselves—it is little wonder that they were not faithful to their marriage vows. I need not read the strong expression in which the prophet sets forth the fornication and adultery which abounded in his day—when they did not hesitate to bring grief into their houses and the utmost sorrow and misery to their wives by indulging their passions—for he that is traitorous to *God* will soon be treacherous to all domestic ties.

What can we expect, even, when a man is irreligious but that he will soon be impure if he is not already? I have marked it often that when men who profess to be religious decline from the ways of God, it often happens that if you track them home—not to the home of their wife and children, but to their favorite haunts—you will discover a corruption of life of which the external observer little dreamed!

Only Judgment Day will reveal how many hearths have been desolated, how many hearts have been broken by the cruel unfaithfulness of husbands who have crushed those whom they vowed to cherish! This is one of the meanest forms of falsehood—false to their marriage vows as well as to everything else! It is small wonder that they were false to the plain teachings of providence, for it is written that “they have belied the Lord and said, It is not He.”

When God had been chastening, they said, “It is not God. It is bad luck: it is fate: time and chance happen unto all.” They would not see the hand of God! Do you wonder that when men have corrupt and crooked hearts they should not be able to see God’s plain and truthful proceedings or that when they *do* see them they deny them?” “There is no God,” they say, “Or if there is a God, He does not meddle with the things of daily life.” “It is cant and hypocrisy,” they say, “to talk about our troubles coming from God! He does not interfere with human affairs. The laws of matter, the principles of nature—these govern all things. God has set the world going like a clock and left it to its own wheels and pendulum! Or, better still, He has wound it up like a watch and put it under His pillow and has gone to sleep. How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?”

These men were liars, I say, and all who talk in their fashion are liars, too. These wretches hesitated not to lie against the eternal Light of that thrice blessed providence which shines in all the lives of men—yes, shines like the daylight to men who are commonly honest and are willing to see. It needs no great learning to perceive the presence of God all around us. The greatest need is an upright, candid mind. This being so, these men cast off God, Himself—the first step is to put Him out of the field of action and the next is to have done with Him altogether—to substitute other gods. According to the 19th verse, these people had forsaken God and served strange gods. Superstition follows on the heels of unbelief, for bad men are frequently among the most ardent votaries of superstition.

Cast off a pure God and you need a god of some sort and so every man manufactures a god for himself to his liking. The earthy mind of the heathen makes a god of mud. The man whose soul is bound up in his bags makes the golden calf his deity. The dreamy thinker evolves an airy nothing out of his own imagination. The free-thinker invents a god who has no justice and, consequently, takes no vengeance upon sin. Man looks for God and thinks he sees Him when he sees himself in a mirror! By nature every man is his own deity—he worships his own image. It is only the man that is pure in heart that can see God, for what the man is, that will his god be to him—but these men cast off God and set up superstitious beliefs of their own and, therefore, false gods were their choice.

And, worst of all, if there can possibly be worse, when a man once gives himself up to a deceitful heart, he gets to be a destroyer of others. Notice the 26th verse. “They lay wait, as he that sets snares; they set a trap, they catch men.” Not content with being lost, themselves, they became the servants of Satan to destroy others! Oh, it is a lamentable thing to think that there are persons whose lips drop moral plagues among youth whenever they speak—whose conduct and example are such that they might well be put in an everlasting quarantine and shut away like lepers, especially from youth, lest they should infect the rising race! I hope that I do not speak to anyone here who is a man-catcher—who sets traps to catch men, aiming to pervert, to corrupt, to mislead, to beguile. Such fiends in human form have surely reached the last stage of corruption when they not only sin, themselves, but are the creators of sin in others!

Look well at this picture of the progress of the deceitful. They begin with being dishonest to their fellow men and at last it comes to this—that they become Satan’s commissioned agents, trappers for the devil, fowlers who ensnare men as bird catchers take the winged fowl! This was the state of affairs in Jeremiah’s time. We have not, I trust, quite such a condition of things among us today, as a plague universally prevalent, but we have much of the disease of deceit in all quarters, high and low, and to what a head it may come, time, alone, can tell! The appeal of Jeremiah was that of a holy man to God. He says, in effect, “O Lord, are not Your eyes such that You can detect what is truth and what is deceit? You spy out the truth. That which is brought to You as worship, You can tell whether it is sincere or not. You can see the pretender’s face through his mask and read his heart through his outward profession. Your eyes spy out the facts which lie beneath the covering of appearances. You can discern between the righteous and the wicked.”

Yes, God is the detector of shams and counterfeits and by His infallible judgment the precious shall be severed from the vile—"for the Lord is a God of judgment and by Him actions are weighed." "Are not Your eyes upon the truth?" That is, "Do You not discover truthfulness wherever it exists?" The prophet had bid them go through the streets and search for an honest man, but he, in effect, cries, "Lord, You know where he is if there is one yet remaining." God has not to search with a lantern to find a truthful man, for, "the Lord knows them that are His." Lot in Sodom is like a lone bird on the mountains, but the Lord perceived him. The truthful ones are often hidden from mankind, but the eyes of God are steadfastly fixed upon them, as it is written, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and His ears are open to their cry."

The Lord can detect imposters, but He can also discover truthfulness and we may be sure He will do it. The prophet also means that God approved of that which He discovered. "Are not Your eyes upon the truth?" You will not look upon hypocrisy—it is Your abhorrence and You will not turn Your eyes that way. Your eyes burn like fire to consume those that would impose upon You, but as for those that are sincere of heart, You love them and watch over them to do them good. They are never out of Your sight. They leave not Your presence! They bask in Your smile. O Lord, are not Your eyes upon truthfulness, to approve of it, to help it, to defend it, to vindicate it even to the last?

Let this which has gone before stand for a preface. And now let us come to the practical instructions which our text should yield us.

I. I think that there are four lessons and the first is THE UTTER FOLLY OF ALL PRETENCE. Hypocrisy is useless altogether, for God sees through it. You may, by great cleverness, delude your fellow men for a while, though you will find it a poor and difficult business. But you can never deceive God. It is not that you may deceive the Lord for a little time and then afterwards be discovered. No, you cannot mislead Him even for an instant. He reads us as we read a book. He sees through us as we see through a sheet of clear glass. The instantaneous imagination which flits across the mind like a stray bird leaving no track nor trace, God observes and knows it altogether.

To pretend to be other than we are before God is a hideous madness. Surely, Satan, himself, must laugh in his sleeve at those who come before God with words of piety on their lips when there is no devotion in their hearts—it is the comedy of a tragic blasphemy! It is utterly useless. It is a waste of time and energy. It were infinitely better that you were doing something else than dress and paint and put on ornaments to go before God who sees you in your spiritual death to be nothing but naked corruption. May God grant that we may never play the fool in this way, for playing the fool it is—to hope to appear before Him otherwise than what we really are deep down in our hearts.

Nor is it only useless, it is hilarious for any man to hope that he can stand better with God by speaking more softly than his heart would suggest, or by using words which his soul does not really enter into! It is, in reality, to be doing the reverse of what he thinks to do. You spoil your sacrifice if there is any tincture of the odious gall of hypocrisy about it. Oh, if the Pharisee did but know that when he made broad the borders of his garments, put on his phylactery and sounded a trumpet before him in the streets he was not pleasing God, but was actually provoking Him, surely he would have sense enough to mend his ways!

Everything about you and me that is unreal, God hates, and hates it more in His own people than anywhere else! If in prayer we use expressions that really do not come from our *hearts*, or if in talking to our fellow men we stick feathers in our caps to be a little taller and finer than we really are, it is abhorrent in the sight of God! He would sooner have us come before Him in all the nakedness and shame of our first parents and stand there and confess our crimes than dress ourselves out in the fig leaves of formality and hypocrisy. Pretence is injurious to men as well as useless—it is not only an empty wind—but it is as the breath of pestilence.

Moreover, pretense is deadening, for he that begins with tampering with truth will, as I have already shown you, go on from bad to worse. He may say at first, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" And yet, like a dog, he will go into all manner of filthiness before he has done. Let a man once begin to tamper with his conscience, to play tricks with words and especially to trifle with the solemnities of religion—and there is no telling what he will be or do! Oh, I charge my tongue, as I charge yours, never to use a word which is not true when speaking with God or for God, for falsehood before the

judge of all the earth is blasphemy! When we think of Him in our secret souls we must be careful not to allow a false idea, for it is dreadful, even, to *think* an untruth before God.

Falsehood in common life must not be tolerated for a moment. Once begin to sail by the wind of policy and trickery and you must tack and then tack again and again—and as surely as you are alive, you will yet have to tack again! But if you have the motive force of truth within you as a steamboat has its own engine, then you can go straight in the teeth of wind and tempest. The man of truth is the true man. He is the man to honor God in life and death. He is the man to fear nothing and win everything. He is the man whom the Lord accepts, who feels that if the heavens fall it is not for him to prop them with a lie if that could make them stand! He is the man who is resolved to be before God and before man just what he is, wearing his heart upon his sleeve and throwing back every shutter of his soul that the divine eye may inspect all! “Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, in whose spirit there is no guile.”

This freedom from guile is a main ingredient of the blessedness. The conscience must be clear and honest or it will gather dust and defilement every day and the man will wax worse and worse. And there is this to be added—that falsehood and pretense before God are damnable! I cannot use a less forcible word than that. Pretence fatally condemns men if it is continued in. I have noticed in reference to conversions one noteworthy fact. I would not wish to assert as a general rule that which happens to be the result of my personal observation, but be the rule what it may, all the world over, this one thing is a statement of my own experience—I have constantly seen almost all sorts of people converted—great blasphemers, pleasure-seekers, thieves, drunkards, unchaste persons and hardened reprobates—but rarely have I seen a man converted who has been a thorough-paced liar.

I might have been still more correct if I had said *never* to my knowledge have I seen a wily, crafty man of cunning become a disciple of Jesus! The heart which is crammed with craft and treachery seems as if it had passed out of the reach of divine grace. You remember that the ground which brought forth fruit when the sower went forth to sow is called “honest and good ground.” There was nothing good in it *spiritually*, but it was honest, true, sincere and, so far, “good.” Give me plain-spokenness and I have hope for a man. If a fellow can look you straight in the eyes, you can deal with him. An open-hearted sailor, honest as the noonday sun, puts on no imitation of religion, but is evidently a bad fellow, a very bad fellow and yet, when the grace of God enables him to listen to the gospel, how he sucks it in and with what heartiness he responds to it!

How very different it is with that clever gentleman who always attends a place of worship and knows how to raise quibbles and to answer texts of Scripture—and to blunt the edge of any truth of God that touches his conscience! You know him, do you not? He is a great sorrow to me. What a mischief-maker he is in all sorts of circles and what a fetcher and carrier of religious gossip! He slips in and out of gospel services like a dog in a fair and nothing ever comes of his running about. He is not good enough to be good to himself! How can you get at him? He knows all you can tell him and yet knows nothing in truth. He is harder to handle than an eel, for he is all twists and turns. The man is shut up in armor! He is cased all over with his lying self-deceitfulness and the arrows of the truth of God are blunted when they touch his harness. May none of you ever grow into the likes of him.

I charge you, above all things, be true. If Baal is God, serve him, but say so and do it in broad daylight. If the devil is your master, do not disown him—but do not be one of those mean sneaks who will serve God on Sundays and the devil when it pays them better! Be not one who will profess to be a Christian to be respectable—and under the cover of that will indulge in the most disreputable vices. Such a man, though never out of the reach of the infinite grace of God—I never meant to say that—is usually the kind of man that the election of God does not light upon and that the grace of God seldom visits. Amidst a very large and wide observation I have noticed the fact which I have stated and, therefore, I bid all pretenders look to themselves lest their bands be made strong and their death-irons be riveted on their wrists before they know of it.

I would say to young persons beginning life, whatever errors you fall into, whatever mistakes you make, yes, and into whatever transgressions you may wander, be true. Wear no cloak of hypocrisy! Profess not to be what you are not! Never dare to jeopardize your soul by a lie! Remember, no way to hell is surer than the way of deceit, for it is written, “All liars shall have their portion in the lake that burns with

fire and brimstone.” He that loves and makes a lie shall be cast away from the presence of God and from the glory of His power. May the Holy Spirit of truth bless this warning as to the folly of making pretences and forging falsehoods before God.

II. Our second lesson is THE GREAT VALUE OF TRUTHFULNESS. “O Lord, are not Your eyes upon truthfulness?” The great value of it is this—that it, alone, is regarded by God in matters of religion—His eyes are upon that which is truthful about us and all the rest is not worthy of His notice. For instance, suppose I say, “I repent.” The question is—Do I really and from my heart sorrow for sin? Is there a change in my mind with regard to sin so that what I once loved I now detest? Is it so?—for only that part of our repentance which is of the *heart* is accepted before God. Tears, sighs, groans—these are mere wind and water, and go for nothing if the heart is not broken.

The same holds good in reference to faith. A man may say, “I believe,” as thousands say their creed—“I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,” and so on. Ah, but do you *trust* in God with your whole heart? Are you truly and sincerely believing in God, and God’s word, and God’s Son, and God’s gospel? If not, all your professed faith is useless! True faith the Lord accepts and smiles upon, but it is a *real* thing and dwells deeper down than the lips and the throat. As to love to Christ, you know how very easy it is to sing sweet hymns about love to Jesus and yet how few are living so as to prove their attachment to the Redeemer. We say—

*“O love divine, how sweet You are!
When shall I find my willing heart
All taken up by You?”*

But are we knit to Jesus? Is it heart-work? Does our very soul cleave to Jesus? Do we follow after Him as the thirsty hart after the water brook, resolved to find Him and to abide by Him, or to die in the attempt?

Lip-love is little better than hate in the esteem of Christ. Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Christ in your very soul tonight? If you do not, all talk about love is but a mockery of His name! Simon, son of Jonas, have you real practical love to Jesus? You can sing, Simon, but can you, *will* you feed your Master’s sheep and so give *evidence* of your love? Simon, son of Jonas, you are very eager and fervent, but do you so intensely love Jesus as to care for His little ones and feed His lambs? This shall be the test of your love! This is coming to the point! The same truth of God bears upon all the ordinances of religion. When we professed to worship God, how much praise was there in the song? As much as the *heart* made?

There was no true praise of God in the noise of that set of pipes and pedals and keys and stops! I judge not those who find these noises helpful to devotion, but assuredly the sounds, themselves, are no part of divine worship! God does not accept praise from inanimate machinery! What cares He about what noise the air makes when it passes through pipes and valves? Even our singing is no better—it is but the sound of air as it is passing through the throat. What is there in that? No, the Lord only regards *heart*-singing and the song of the soul is the amount and quantity of our song that was accepted of the Lord. As to prayer. “A large prayer meeting.” Yes, but the largeness of the number of attendants is not always a gauge of the quantity and power of prayer! The quantity of *heart* in the prayer decides its quality. The same is it with baptism and with the Lord’s Supper. The test is, how far is this done as unto the Lord? How far does the soul enter into the meaning of the outward symbols and get at God in the use of them?

A plunge in this baptistry is no better than a bath you may take in your own home! And the bread and wine on yonder table are no better than what you shall eat tomorrow at your own table unless your *heart* comes to the baptism, rejoicing in being buried with Christ, and unless your *heart* comes to the Table that you may feast upon His flesh and drink His blood! Let this stand, therefore, as the great test and gauge of all religion! We have no lack of external religion in these days. There, fill a cauldron with it! Set the great pot upon the fire! It turns into steam—see how it flies away! And what is left? Ah, so little that you may search with a microscope to discover any solid residue! Those few grains at the bottom of the pot are, however, all that is real and all that will remain in the day of testing.

Such is the stern fact, that God values the truthfulness and the sincerity of our actions, the heartiness and the depth of them. And He does not regard what we do unless the truth of God appears in it in all its

forms. This is equally true of all your private worship. That daily reading of the chapter is a very excellent thing, but do you read with your *soul* as well as with your eyes? That morning prayer, and that evening prayer—those few minutes snatched in the middle of the day—these are good. I will not wish you to alter the regularity of your devotion, but still, it may all be clockwork, godliness with no life in it! Oh, for one single groan from the heart! It may have more prayer in it than an army of collects and liturgies, though there may be prayer there, too, if the heart uses them before the living God with sincerity.

The value of truthfulness will be seen because even in its lowest development, God regards it. I think I might call that its lowest development which is spoken of in the first verse of the chapter, “Go and see if there are any that seek truthfulness”—a man who feels that he is not all he wants to be, but yet he wishes to be truthful. The man who is here sought for is conscious of many faults. Yes, and he feels that sometimes he is not perfectly candid and transparent and, therefore, he hates himself and watches the deceitful tendencies of his heart and zealously seeks to be true. Oh, my dear friend, if you really are on the right tack. If you are trying to be truthful; if you are laboring to be quite honest before God; if you can say, “I need genuine conversion and real faith in Christ. I cannot put up with shams and hollow professions,” then God accepts even that seeking after truth which is in your soul! May He keep you to that search by His Holy Spirit till you come out into the clear, noontide light of the blessed truth of God as it is in Jesus.

It is evident that truth is regarded by God with acceptance and with pleasure wherever He sees it in the soul. My friend, you cannot pray in public as you would dearly like to do, but the few words you utter are hot from your heart. You cannot pray long, even in private, but your groan is sincere. In secret you sigh, “Oh, that!” And, “Ah!” And, “Would that!” You *mean* those short prayers. There is no sham in such cries of the heart! Your very soul goes in them and God is pleased with them. I would sooner have a little diamond than a block of granite—and the Lord would sooner have the least morsel of truthfulness than the largest mass of pretentious, ostentatious religion! How far, dear friend, are you anxious to be right with God? Will you confess that you have sinned and pray to have your sin blotted out by the Lord who sees it all?

How far do you wish that God should know all about you? How far are you glad that there *is* a God? How far are you anxious to get into the very light of God through Jesus Christ? For, just so far as you truthfully wish to be like the true and living God, so far are you acceptable with the Most High! Oh, my dear brother, sister, you may have only one talent. You may be very poor and very obscure and, to the church of God, you may be almost unknown. But if your soul goes up and down these streets crying to God to bless your fellow men; if you speak only what you feel and if you walk before the Lord with tenderness and brokenness of spirit, striving always to be true, He accepts and blesses you! If you are resting on Jesus Christ, alone, and on His precious blood, though your faith is feeble, it is true and God will bless you and save you—and you shall be His in the day when He makes up His jewels!

III. Thirdly and very briefly, let us learn THE INFLUENCE OF TRUTHFUL MEN. The influence of really truthful men is too wonderful to be overlooked. First, it is so great with God that one of them can save a city from destruction! Jerusalem was full of every evil and God said, “Shall I not punish such a people as this?” And yet He also said, “If there is any that executes judgment and seeks truth, I will pardon it.” He will save a *city* for the sake of one man! A parallel case is that in which the Lord was ready to pardon Sodom if but 10 righteous had been found there. No doubt many a state has been preserved by the godly remnant in it whom the majority would have exterminated had it been in their power! Hence the value of good men in bad localities!

When you, my dear friend, go into a hamlet or village where there is no religion, do not be so very sorry at your position, for God may have great ends to be served by you. You are a lump of salt and we do not want to keep the salt locked up by itself in the storeroom. Where should the salt be put? Why, where the corruption is likely to come—to preserve what is good—and to keep away that which is evil! I believe that every now and then the Lord puts His hands into the saltbox of the tabernacle and takes away some that do not wish to go, but He says, “You must go for the benefit of mankind. I have need of salt over there and over there.” In the happy church of which you are a member you would like always to remain, but you must go, or else be useless—which is your choice?

When the gospel chariot needs horses, will you forever stand in the stall? Are the oxen today as in the days of Job, to be plowing and the asses to be feeding beside them forever? Let us not complain of being used, or of being placed where we can be used! All light must not be stored up in the sun—scatter it over earth's poor lands that need it lest all the trees of the field die in perpetual night. Surely you would not have all waters in the sea—let them be exhaled and let them return in silvery drops upon the soil to fertilize it. It must be so—God blesses us to make us blessings! One good man can benefit a whole district! Ask of God that you may be so sincere, so truthful that He may bless those around about you for your sake.

This influence is such that it never was attributed to any man on account of his riches. God never saved a city because there was a millionaire in it—it may be He has done the reverse! I never heard of any city being saved because there was a learned man in it, or an eloquent man in it, or because there was some great architect in it. No, no, no! The Lord is no respecter of persons and He sees not as man sees. Sincerity before God is approved—true reliance upon Christ the Lord is accepted—and for this He blesses us and others through us. And, mark you one other thing, dear friend. If you are upright before God and you should happen to fall among people that despise you and reject you, it is a sad thing to have to say, but it is true and a proof of the great influence of truthful men—your word, when you speak for God, shall be like fire and those round about you shall be wood and it shall devour them!

If you are not a savor of life to life to men, you will be a savor of death to death to them. And, mark this, if the Christian church sends missionaries, as I trust it yet may be awakened to do in such numbers as it ought to send them—and if they are rejected—we are not to conclude that, therefore, they have had no influence whatever. But, solemn and dreadful as it is, it is a fact that the preaching of the gospel shall be a testimony against the nations and this shall fulfill the eternal purpose of the Lord! This all proves how the influence of a truthful man is strong; he is never a “chip in the porridge—there is a flavor in him.

He that is sincerely right towards God is an efficient operating cause to which effects will be given. He cannot be a mere name or nullity—he must produce results by his influence. He has force and that force will, according to those he comes in contact with, turn to blessings or else involve dread responsibility on those who resist it! Go, I pray you, then, dear friends, and live with God and then be not afraid to live with men. Whoever they may be, God will make you to have power over them and power with Him on their behalf.

IV. To close. Let me urge upon you, in the fourth place, the last lesson, namely—THE NECESSITY AND THE MEANS OF OUR BEING TRUE AND SINCERE BEFORE HIM WHOSE EYES BEHOLD TRUTHFULNESS. My first argument is this—these times require it. This is an age of tricks and policies. Oh, the puffs—the lying puffs—you meet with everywhere in books and innumerable broadsides. Everybody who goes abroad has need to carry a discount table with him to arrive at the truth of statements that are made. Be you, therefore, more true! At the present moment there is going through this city of ours a lying influence of the worst kind on the behalf of Popery. I do not refer to the honest Catholic priest who comes bravely before us in his true colors, but I refer to those who would be Protestant ministers who are beguiling the people, and leading them gradually away from the doctrines of the Reformation and the gospel of Christ.

The land swarms with Jesuitical churchmen who look towards Canterbury but row towards Rome! Everywhere in society you meet with this disguised influence! Are there not hospitals not far from here that are simply houses for proselytizing? Are there not sisterhoods which are more for the making of Romanists than they are for the healing of the sick? Why, we are surrounded with the givers of bribes of all kinds, whose one design is to buy the people from the gospel! Is there a house but what these sisters and brothers will enter, if they possibly can, with gifts and so called charities, trying to buy the souls of the poor that they may plunge them into the darkness which surrounds themselves? The net is coming closer to us than ever and we cannot help feeling its meshes!

The truth of God is the way to cut the net! The truth of God is a straight, honest, sharp-bladed sword and you have only to use it well and away go the meshes of deceit! They may compass sea and land and make their proselytes if they will, but we will preach the everlasting gospel of the blessed God and we will pray that all who love it shall live it and be truthful and be straight, whoever may be dark and mys-

terious! I would scorn to make a convert to my persuasion by the concealment of anything that I believe, or by the putting it in a light that was not clear, or by bribery and scheming! If men cannot be saved by truth, they certainly cannot be saved by lies and tricks and policies. Let us be true, then, brothers and sisters, all of us, and we may not question the result.

Meet the Prince of Darkness with the Light of God! He cannot stand against it. Our times require our sincerity. So does our God also require it; I have already spoken to this and I need not repeat the solemn strain. So do our souls require it; our eternal welfare demands it. Oh, there must be no mistake about our being true before God, for when it comes to dying work, nothing will stand us, then, but sincerity! When he comes to the light of the judgment-bar, where will the hypocrite appear? Ah, Judas, come and kiss your Master, again! Betray Him again if you dare! See how the traitor flies! He cannot bear the light of God, nor can men who are like he is! May you never have one drop of Judas' blood within your veins. God take it away if it is there.

It is an awful thing to live untruthfully. It is a sort of minor hell to go about and feel that you have not spoken the straight thing in every company. You spoke against a certain person very bitterly when he was not present to defend himself and now you have to meet him and to fake admiration of him in the presence of those who heard your former tirade! You are in an awkward position—a worm in a ring of fire could not wriggle more painfully! I thank God that I have learned, always, to say to a man what I think of him and I do not find that I make enemies by doing so. No, those to whom I have said the harshest things are some of my best friends this day! I am sure that there is no plain path, no easy path, like that of downright truthfulness towards our fellow men and there is no right path for eternity like that or downright honesty before the living God!

May His Spirit work this excellence in us, for He is the great author of truth in the inward parts. We are all crooked from birth. We go astray, speaking lies from our childhood! One of the first things that a child does is to speak what is not true and parents, sometimes, teach their children to be false by laughing at their little deceits. Yes, and they will tell their children what is not true as a kind of sportive childish recreation. But this will not do! We are all inclined to shuffle with God. It is hard work to bring us up to confession of sin at the first and to make us pull off our pretty, cheating righteousness. We like to wear a rag or two of our own as long as we can. That base money of our own merit—those counterfeit farthings of supposed excellence—we do not like giving them up.

It is hard to get the last penny out of us and make us bankrupts in the court of heaven and yet to this we *must* surely come. When we do wrong, do we not feel a tendency to think that it was not so very wrong in *us*? The same offense in anybody else is horrible and we go off to a neighbor to report what has been done—but in ourselves it is a venial error not worth a censure! We hold the scales of justice, as we think, with blind eyes, but we just wink a little beneath the handkerchief and spy out an excuse for ourselves. We must get away from all this false judging and yet we never shall unless the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of truth and light—shall create in us a new heart and a right spirit. He must keep us true, too, or we shall go aside like a broken bone.

This is the sum of the matter—we must come to God as poor, weak, helpless sinners! We must trust Christ to help us, and look to the divine Spirit to purge and cleanse us and make us truthful! And then all will be well. Let this, then, be our prayer—“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” The Lord grant His blessing to these words, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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